



Public Health Committee
Public Hearing – March 2, 2016
SB 296 AAC The Provision of Healthy Food In Vending Machines
Operated On State Property And Recommendations Of The Childhood
Obesity Task Force (Section 1)
Jim Williams, Government Relations Director
American Heart Association

I would like to thank Chairwoman Gerratana and Chairman Ritter, and the Committee for providing me with the opportunity to comment on SB 296 AAC The Provision Of Healthy Food In Vending Machines Operated On State Property And Recommendations Of The Child Obesity Task Force, on behalf of the American Heart Association.

The American Heart/Stroke Association (AHA) is the largest voluntary health organization in the world who is working to build healthier lives, free of cardiovascular disease (CVD) and stroke. While Section 1 of this bill does not require changes to which food and beverages are made available on state property, it does require an assessment which is a good first step so that we can all better understand the current landscape. The AHA supports this legislation because we believe that it will ultimately help to build healthier lives in Connecticut.

Vending machines are frequented by children and families in public buildings, parks, and recreation centers. The vending machines often sell snacks and beverages high in sugar, trans-fat, saturated fat and salt, with little nutritional value. State and local governments can increase access to healthier foods and beverages and create the ability for residents to make a healthier choice by requiring all vending service providers to ensure healthier options are available in vending machines on public property. This bill will increase access to healthier foods and beverages sold through vending machines on Connecticut State property.

Thirty-seven percent of Connecticut adults are overweight, and 25% are obese.ⁱ Diet-related diseases, such as heart disease, diabetes, cancer, stroke, and osteoporosis are leading causes of disability and death.ⁱⁱ Diet-related diseases reduce productivity and increase absenteeism of the workforce, reducing Connecticut's economic prosperity.ⁱⁱⁱ Diet-related diseases increase health care costs to the state, businesses, and individual citizens. In Connecticut, close to \$1 billion in health care costs are attributable to obesity, including \$246 million in Medicare costs and \$419 million in Medicaid costs.^{iv}

We believe that it is important to improve the foods and beverages available on state property so that the State can support healthy eating for the approximately 52,000 full-time employees, as well as for the part-time employees and countless others visiting state property.^v The state would also be able to provide healthy options resident's desire. According to a 2010 study by the Snack Food Association, 74% of people are trying to eat healthier, with 65% eating specific foods to lose weight. Healthy snack sales are outpacing traditional snacks 4 to 1.^{vi}

By supporting this bill the State can act as an active driver of demand for and access to healthful food and beverages, instead of selling unhealthy food, which contributes to obesity and diet-related diseases. Finally the State needs to promote healthy eating habits and provide a model for businesses, institutions, and residents. Now is the time to ensure that state employees and visitors have access to healthier food choices.

Sincerely,

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ⁱ U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Connecticut: State Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity Profile." Accessed at <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/state-local-programs/profiles/pdfs/connecticut-state-profile.pdf> on February 19, 2016

ⁱⁱ U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Chronic Diseases and Health Promotion." Accessed at <http://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/overview/index.htm> on February 19, 2016.

ⁱⁱⁱ Institute of Medicine, National Academies. Accelerating Progress in Obesity Prevention. Washington, D.C. National Academies Press, 2012.

^{iv} Finkelstein EA, Fiebelkorn IC, Wang G. "State –Level Estimates of Annual Medical Expenditures Attributable to Obesity," Obesity Research. 2004, vol 12, pp. 18-24. Accessed at <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1038/oby.2004.4/epdf> on February 19, 2016.

^v CT Office of Legislative Research Report. "Number of permanent, Full-Time State Employees." Moran, John. August 29, 2005. Accessed at <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2005/rpt/2005-R-0654.htm> on February 19, 2016.

^{vi} Watts SL. "State of the Snack Industry 2010." Accessed at <http://www.healthycornerstores.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/SNAXPO-2011.pdf> on February 19, 2016.